



Representative

**Beverly
Woods**

23rd District

Report to the 23rd District 2001 Legislative Summary

Committees:

Transportation
Capital Budget
Rules
Trade and Economic Development
Legislative Transportation Committee
Joint Task Force on Ferries
Joint Task Force on State Parks

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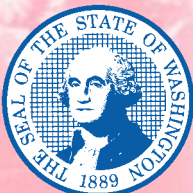
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www.leg.wa.gov

State government on the Internet:

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October 2001

Dear Friends,

The terrible attacks on the United States last month have brought a new perspective to the challenges that faced our state's legislators during the 2001 session.

Between a transportation infrastructure crisis, a deteriorating climate for business, a slipping economy, an energy crisis, an earthquake, and the difficulty of reaching agreement in a tied House of Representatives, we had – and still have – our hands full. However, none of these issues can compare to the tragedies that struck our national capital, New York City and rural Pennsylvania. Those who have suffered and our national leaders continue to need our prayers and support.

I went into the session looking for opportunities to protect the special transportation needs of the Kitsap area, increase the efficiency and accountability of state government, and address the issues that affect you and people across our state: energy, property rights, schools, public safety and more.

Looking back on the session, we tend to focus on the things that were left unfinished. But there was a great deal of progress made on issues important to the citizens of Kitsap County. This newsletter offers an overview of some of the more significant actions, as well as those that still command our attention. Please take a few minutes to read it, remembering that while our state still has issues to resolve, we should be thankful that as Americans, we have the power to resolve issues and address our citizens' needs through self-governance and elected representation.

Thank you again for the honor of representing you.

Sincerely,

Beverly Woods

Beverly Woods
State Representative

Budget: puts state on course for tax increase, service cuts

The two-year, \$22.78 billion operating budget pushed through the House this session ignored the state's slipping economic condition and taxpayer demands for greater accountability and value for their tax dollars. It simply isn't sustainable, especially now that we know about the state's pessimistic September economic forecast and the Boeing layoffs announced after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

We should be budgeting like responsible families, who don't spend money they don't have. Instead, over the next two years this plan will spend \$760 million more than the state expects to take in, through taxes and other revenue sources. It spends another \$668 million of "one-time" money on ongoing programs and leaves very little as a cushion against an economic downturn. I don't see how we can support this level of spending without big cuts in essential public services. It's unfortunate that the Senate passed the budget, then refused to negotiate with the House toward something sustainable.

Also, this plan significantly undermines our ability to fund K-12 education and build the critical transportation infrastructure our communities and state economy need. I couldn't support such reckless spending of your hard-earned dollars.

Transportation: we need new investment that makes sense

Contrary to the impression left by the media, the Legislature did adopt a transportation budget. It will spend, over the next two years, the \$3.4 billion the state expects to collect from the 23-cent-per-gallon gas tax and other sources. This "current law" budget pays for the vital task of maintaining and upgrading the transportation infrastructure we have.

The disagreement was over what's called a "new law" package – a budget that would pay for new projects using revenue generated through new laws, like an increase in the gas tax.

I spent many hours at the transportation negotiating table where House and Senate members and the governor and his mediator struggled to agree on a new-law budget – one that would address the issues on all sides of Puget Sound, and make sense to taxpayers statewide, whether or not they were asked to vote on it directly.



As the only Kitsap legislator there, I was able to explain our area's special concerns to the other decision-makers, including the governor. I lined up support for a new passenger-only ferry to serve Kingston, and argued for a package that would meet not only the state's needs but those of our communities: a second Tacoma Narrows bridge, highway improvements, local road improvements, and better ferry service overall. In the end, however, there were not enough votes, Democrat or Republican, to pass a new-law transportation package.

Responses to my survey earlier this year made it clear taxpayers don't want to pay higher transportation taxes unless they are sure existing dollars are being stretched to the limit. Fortunately, besides passing the current-law budget, the Legislature approved long-needed transportation reforms.

For example, a bill to streamline the permitting process saves both time and money while maintaining environmental standards. We also approved a "design-build" measure and an agreement making it more affordable to acquire rights-of-way for future projects.

These "efficiencies" immediately will give taxpayers more value and increase the Department of Transportation's accountability. But all the efficiencies in the world won't stretch our \$3.4 billion budget enough to cover the \$17 billion of new construction our state could use. New investment is needed, in a way that is fair, makes sense, and gets results. I will be ready to head back to the negotiating table.

Report to the 23rd District

Kitsap does well in House capital budget

Our only higher-education institution, Olympic College, got the support it needed in the House capital budget. The \$13 million appropriation the Legislature made two years ago for OC's Poulsbo campus would have expired before the college got the project going. I made sure it was extended. However, it appears the funding has been frozen by the governor.

Also, the budget included the \$10.1 million needed for the Bremerton Readiness Center – a resource that, in light of the terrorist attacks in September, will be a welcome addition to our area. In addition, the budget authorizes \$16.5 million for a 240-bed skilled nursing facility at the Washington Veteran's Home in Retsil (to be built with matching federal funds) and appropriates another \$3.2 million for seismic and other upgrades to the Retsil home.

Making it easier to generate new power

It's been a quarter-century since a major commitment to new power generation was made in our state. That caught up with us in the form of an energy crisis that has eased with mild summer weather but is sure to return by winter. The answer is more power, which is why I supported the passage of major energy legislation focused on getting new power to our region's energy grid.

The bill (House Bill 2247) addresses the shortsightedness of our state's energy policy during the 1990s, by encouraging construction of new power-generating facilities while promoting renewable energy sources.

On the generating side, the law cuts state red tape on building bigger power plants.

On the conservation and alternative side, it would encourage better energy management in public buildings, like schools, and require utilities to give their customers the option to buy power from alternative energy sources.

It will take time for these steps to affect your utility bill. In the meantime, I sponsored emergency legislation that made \$5 million available to help low-income families with rising power bills.

Stepping up the fight against meth

The methamphetamine epidemic in our state continues to grow, and Kitsap County is seeing a corresponding increase in the number of meth labs reported.

Lawmakers fought meth this session by putting up a



Central Kitsap student Elizabeth Worman spent a day "shadowing" Rep. Woods and learning about the political process as part of a school project. Serving as legislative pages during the 2001 session were Megan MacNeal of Kingston, Kimberly Kinnett of Bremerton and Joshua Swanson of Silverdale.

direct roadblock to meth makers: a new law that restricts the sale and possession of "precursor" drugs that are meth ingredients, such as ephedrine, a common ingredient in cold medicines.

But we must go farther. I co-sponsored House Bill 2082, which essentially would give law enforcement officers the ability to get children away from a place where meth is being made. The House passed it, but the Senate failed to vote on it.

I also sponsored a bill to make the production and distribution of meth a "strike" under the "Three Strikes, You're Out" law. It passed the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee, but failed to advance.

Better access to cancer treatment

One in nine women in our state will face breast cancer in her lifetime. For the past 10 years, all the state could do was give a woman the bad news that cancer has been detected. It would be up to her to find and pay for treatment on her own.

I spoke before the full House in favor of House Bill 1058, which takes the next step by helping low-income women afford the treatment they need. Now, low-income women who have been diagnosed with breast or cervical cancer through a state-run screening program also will have access to publicly funded treatment.

Helping our schools find the teachers they need

School performance begins with qualified teachers. I supported three successful bills this session aimed at increasing the number of teachers who are “in the pipeline” and available to schools – especially in areas such as math, science, special education and languages.

The Legislature took a step toward making our schools safer by passing Senate Bill 5533. It requires public schools and licensed day care centers to post signs and notify parents regarding pesticide applications on school property.

I sponsored legislation that would let school administrators know if a student who committed a crime – involving another student, a teacher or school property – is about to be taken into custody on school premises. House Bill 1992 passed the House unanimously but was blocked in the Senate.

Also, I supported House Bill 1699, which would expand the penalties for juveniles who threaten to bomb schools, and House Bill 2137, which would allow schools to treat the possession of explosives the same way they do the possession of firearms.

Ferry riders deserve more for higher fares

While it’s true that ferry commuters need to pay a larger share of ferry operating costs, I was opposed to the big fare hikes adopted by the Transportation Commission this summer. These only reach deeper into the pockets of Kitsap residents and businesses who depend on the ferries for their livelihoods.

It was disappointing that Kitsap legislators were not united against the bill enabling the commission to raise fares above the limit set by Initiative 601. The way I read that measure, Senate Bill 6181, ferry fares can increase by any percentage the commission wants. That could mean sizable yearly hikes, with no accountability, unless the Legislature steps in.

On the bright side, the current-law transportation budget includes two amendments I introduced to

help the system operate more efficiently and conveniently and maybe even generate new revenue. That’s a direct benefit to ferry commuters and taxpayers.

One directs the state Department of Transportation to figure out how much money could come from selling advertising space on ferries.

The second authorizes a study to look at the costs and long-term benefits of preserving the ferry maintenance facility at Eagle Harbor, on Bainbridge Island. I will

serve on the special legislative committee overseeing the study. We ultimately will recommend whether to spend several million taxpayer dollars on rehabilitating and modernizing, or look at moving ferry maintenance to another location, like the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard.

I proposed an amendment to make ferry tickets available at more locations than terminal offices, but it was opposed.

Rep. Woods will be in Kingston on:

Tuesday, October 23

Tuesday, November 27

Tuesday, December 11

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

26076 Illinois Avenue

(Next door to the sheriff's precinct office)

Please call her Olympia office at
(360) 786-7842 to make an appointment.

Report to the 23rd District

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